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ABSTRACT

This study investigated teacher, district and site administrators' perceptions of school violence and violence prevention programs in 15 school districts of various sizes at all educational levels in 12 states representing all geographical regions of the United States. A 162-item survey was administered to 202 teachers, 59 building administrators, 18 district administrators, and 2 school counselors. The study focused on: (1) school personnel's fears about violence; (2) frequency of school personnel as victims of violent actions over the past two years; (3) areas in the school environment which posed the greatest risk of violence for students or school personnel; (4) perceived causes of violence; (5) profiles of typical victims and perpetrators of violence; (6) strategies implemented by schools to deal with violence; (7) perceptions regarding which strategies were considered to be the most and least effective in dealing with violence; and (8) the cost to school districts of violence prevention. Among the results was the following: 27 percent of respondents were concerned, or very concerned, about their personal safety while at school, particularly from verbal attacks or physical threats of violence by students and/or the students' parents. The greatest concerns for physical threats were in the mid-sized or large districts. The study concludes by providing a suggested plan of action to remediate and reduce violence in schools. Contains one table of demographics, four tables of results and 33 references. (Author/JB)

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The Enemy Within: A National Study on School Violence and Prevention

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Abstract

This study investigated teacher, district and site administrators' perceptions of school violence and violence prevention programs in 15 school districts of various sizes in 12 states located across the United States. The study focused upon: (1) school personnel fears about violence, (2) frequency of school personnel as victims of violent actions over the past 2 years, (3) areas in the school environment which pose the greatest risk for violence for students or school personnel, (4) profiles of typical victims and perpetrators of violence, (5) strategies implemented by schools to deal with violence, (6) perceptions regarding which strategies were considered to be the most and least effective in dealing with violence, and (7) the cost to school districts for violence prevention. The study concluded by providing a suggested plan of action to remediate and reduce violence in schools.

The Enemy Within: A National Study on School Violence and Prevention[1]

We are a society in crisis. A gunman fired into a crowd of hundreds gathered outside a bar, killing one and wounding several others. A fifteen year old boy was arrested. A man was beaten to death over a twenty dollar debt. A sixteen year old boy was arrested. (Baker, D, September 24,1995). The incidence of juvenile violence is becoming more and more commonplace across the United States. The number of youths arrested on homicide charges between 1988 and 1992 increased by 101 percent in Ohio alone. "People think juveniles only run away and steal candy bars. They don't. They murder, they commit rapes, they use handguns." (Baker, D. ,1995). While the increasing tide of juvenile violence in the streets is alarming, it is particularly problematic because of insidious encroachment into the public school (Sautter, January 1995). According to a 1994 National School Board Association (NSBA) survey of 700 schools , school violence is worse now than it was five years ago. Research has indicated that in the four years following September 1986, 71 persons were been killed by guns in schools, 201 were severely wounded and 242 were held hostage at gun-point. These acts occurred in thirty-five states and the District of Columbia (Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, 1990). It is estimated that approximately 400,000 boys are carrying a gun to school each year and 100,000 guns are being brought to schools daily (Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, 1990; Stephans, 1994). A 1991 study indicated that one of every eighteen students attending high school carried a gun (Schaaf, Summer 1995). In 1993 the North Carolina Governor's Task Force reported that the violent crime rate in North Carolina schools had increased by 35% since 1988. (Governor's Task Force, 1993). The United States Department of Justice reported that violent crimes among juveniles had risen 24% between 1988 and 1992 (Sautter, January 1995). While this age group accounted for only one tenth of the population in 1992, 25% of crimes involved a juvenile victim that year (Sautter, January 1995). Fox & Pierce (1994) reported that over 90% of the time, males have been both the offender and victim in violent crime and that male students between the ages of 14 and 17 were likely to be involved in related violent activities. Research has indicated that approximately 44% of the time acts of violence occur in school hallways and

1 The present study was funded, in part, by the **Association Of Teacher Educators: Indiana Unit &** the University Evansville.

classrooms and the leading causes of school violence are: gang disputes, drug disputes, accidents, long standing arguments, romantic disagreements, and fights over material possessions (Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, 1990). Although many violent incidents occur on school grounds, the causes for these actions may originate elsewhere.

In a recent survey of school administrators, over 50% of the respondents felt that lack of parental involvement was the single most important contributor to school violence (Stephans, 1994). Societal changes, the breakdown of family relationships, violent media role models and media modeled violent behavior have also been cited as contributing to school violence (Met Life, 1994).

Budgetary, scheduling and resource constraints on American schools make it nearly impossible for the schools to focus adequate attention on this major problem and they are therefore having to deal with violence issues in a piecemeal fashion. Violence programs established to target the areas of parental involvement, gang activity, drugs, and conflict resolution skills are being piloted in middle schools/junior high and senior high schools (Stephans, 1994). Other programs, including police partnerships/liaisons, use of advanced technologies (metal detectors, cameras, etc.), removal of lockers (or not installing them), etc., have also been tried, but the results of these efforts have been less than successful in overcoming the enigmatic problem of school violence (Johnson & Johnson, 1995). While a significant number of programs have been focused at the secondary level, little attention has been directed towards elementary schools or determining what programs might effectively prevent violent behavior before it starts (Johnson & Johnson, 1995).

The purpose of this study was threefold. The first purpose focused on describing the types, frequency and severity of violence in selected public schools. Secondly, the purpose was to identify what course of action schools of various sizes were taking to combat the violence and also to focus on the perceived effectiveness of those interventions. The third purpose of the study was to recommend a violence prevention model which could be implemented effectively to reduce violence beginning at the preschool/elementary level.

METHODOLOGY

Subjects:

Teachers, building administrators, and district administrators in fifteen school districts of varying sizes, from twelve states, representing all geographical regions of the country, participated in the present study. A random sample of two hundred two (202) teachers , fifty-nine (59) building administrators, eighteen (18) district administrators and two (2) school counselors responded to the survey instrument used. Ninety of the 291 respondents were employed at the preschool/elementary level, 90 were employed at the middle school/junior high level, 84 were employed at the high school level, and 17 were involved in a multiple grade environment. Seventy-six respondents held a four year degree, 180 held a masters degree, and 23 held doctoral degrees. One hundred fifteen males and 164 females responded. The ethnic composition of survey respondents was .1% Asian, 12% African American, .4% Hispanic, 77% Caucasian with 6% failing to respond. Eleven were in school districts having fewer than 999 students, 57 were from districts 1000 to 4999 students, 46 were from districts of 5000 to 14999 students, 34 were from districts ranging from 15000 to 29999 students, 43 were from districts of 30000 to 49999 students, and 66 were from districts of 50000 or more students. with 36 individuals failing to respond to this item. Of those who responded to the survey, 71 did not have children in school or had no children. Of those that had children in school, 58 had children at the preschool/elementary level, 46 had children at the middle school/junior high level, 57 had children at the senior high level, and 98 had children at the college or graduate school level.

Insert Table 1 about here.

Instrumentation:

The survey was developed utilizing ethnographic interviews with teachers, site administrators and district administrators from various size school districts located in three midwestern states. The interviews were tape recorded and verbatim transcripts were made. This data, in conjunction with information obtained from a current review of the literature on school and juvenile violence, formed the basis for the construction of survey domains and questions to be used in this study. Survey questions were primarily based on a five point Likert scale. There were some forced choice

items and categorical items (primarily covering demographic information). Three specific questions were incorporated to test the validity of the instrument and were randomly placed in the survey to insure respondents were reading each question and responding appropriately. One repeated question was also included to investigate respondent consistency. The initial screening of the survey instrument was conducted with administrators, teachers and university faculty in the presence of one of the researchers. These sessions were held to insure survey domain and question clarity as well as to determine the length of time necessary for respondents to complete the entire questionnaire. These pilot sessions resulted in further revisions of survey length, question placement and directions for completion. The final survey was six pages long with a cover page which included general instructions. It contained 162 items covering concerns about personal safety, changing behaviors, location of violent events, violence and grade level, perceived causes of violence, victim and perpetrator characteristics, legal and fiscal costs of school violence and violence prevention programs. The time it took participants to complete the survey ranged between 10 and 22 minutes.

Procedures:

A review of the literature which included a search of ERIC and Psych Lit was undertaken. Recent articles in popular magazines and newspapers with articles on school violence were also examined. Areas of particular interest were located and general, open ended questions regarding school violence were developed. Appointments were then made with teachers, site administrators and district administrators to conduct ethnographic interviews. Interviews ranged between 1 to $1^1/_2$ hours in length. All interviews were tape recorded and verbatim transcripts were made. Systematic examination of each interview was conducted using a two-part domain analysis (Spradly, 1979). Survey questions were constructed through the integration of domains and concepts generated from interview responses as well as information previously obtained from a review of the literature .

A map of the 48 continuous United Stated was divided into the following familiar geographic regions Northwest, West, Midwest, South, South East, Northeast. Within each region one large city (over 1,000,000), one midsize city (30,000 to 200,000) and one small city/town (less than 20,000) was selected. Next, a list containing a randomly selected set of teachers, building administrators and

district administrators, including names and school addresses, was obtained from a commercial market research firm. This yielded a target sample of 611 school personnel. Each participant was assigned a number for confidentiality and tracking purposes.

Surveys were mailed to each participant with a cover letter explaining the nature of the study and self-addressed stamped envelope. Approximately 26% of the sample responded to the first mailing. Three weeks later a second mailing was sent to each participant who had not returned the survey materials. The procedural follow-up eventually resulted in a final return of 295 surveys[2].

Four respondents incorrectly answered one or all of the three validity items and were removed from the study. This resulted in a total sample size of 291 or a 48% return rate. The consistency of responses was investigated by correlating a repeated item , which resulted in a consistency indicator of .90.

RESULTS

Personal Safety

The first section of the survey focused on school personnel's feelings of safety and the frequency of experienced threats or actions. Twenty-seven percent of the respondents indicated they were concerned or very concerned about safety while at school. Respondents indicated that they were most concerned about physical threat/attack from students as well as students' parents. Of those responding 14% were concerned or very concerned about physical threats or attack by students while 17% were concerned or very concerned about physical threats or attack by student's parents. Concerns about physical threats or attack was greatest in midsize to large districts, 23% and 17% respectively, with only 7% of those in small schools being concerned. Thirty-five percent of survey participants indicated they were concerned or very concerned about being verbally threatened or attacked by students while 30% were concerned or very concerned about being verbally threatened or attacked by parents. Again, concern was most pronounced in midsize and large districts, 30% and 35% respectively, with significant concerns expressed by personnel even in smaller districts 18%. Only 5% of those responding indicated

[2] At the time of submission of this paper 3 more surveys arrived but their results were not included in this article.

they were concerned or very concerned about sexual harassment by students and 2% indicated they were concerned or very concerned about sexual harassment by parents.

Survey participants were asked to evaluate their concerns for personal safety in dealing with other faculty and administrators. The responses from this survey indicated 6% or less were concerned or very concerned about verbal, physical or sexual threat or attack by other faculty or administrators.

Frequency and Types of Violence

Respondents were asked to indicate the frequency and types of violence they had experienced in the past two years. The categories for this section were; none, 1 to 5 times, 6 to 10 times and 10 or more times. Overall, a majority of respondents had experienced some form of violence at least one or more times in the past two years. Sixty three percent indicated they had been verbally threatened or intimidated, 28 % had been physically threatened or intimidated, 11% had been sexually threatened or intimidated, 68% had been verbally attacked, 9% had been physically attacked, .7% had been sexually attacked and 55% indicated that their room , property and/or school had been seriously vandalized.

The percentages of respondents who had experienced violence six or more times was equally significant. Sixteen percent had been verbally threatened or intimidated six or more times in the past two years. Three percent had been physically threatened or intimidated, .6% had been sexually threatened or intimidated, 22% had been verbally attacked, .7% had been physically attacked and 11% had their room, property and/or school vandalized 6 or more times in the previous two years. The data indicated that the larger districts consistently reported higher frequencies of these occurrences as well as increased violent behaviors of students and parents toward to school personnel.

Changing Behaviors

The respondents were asked to rate how student and faculty behaviors have changed in school and the classroom over the last two years. Survey participants were asked to rate nineteen specific violent behaviors and or changes in students (an "other" category was included) and whether these behaviors /changes have greatly increased, increased, remained the same, decreased, or were not a problem. Of the top ten most increased behaviors, all were student to student behaviors with the

exception of organic problems (i.e., F.A.S., crack babies, etc.) and faculty fear to get involved. Sixty point five percent of respondents indicated that verbal intimidation by students had increased the most over the past two years. Fifty eight point one percent indicated a significant increase in organic problems of students (i.e., F.A.S. crack babies, etc.). The list included behaviors which have greatly increased as: pushing and shoving, 45% sexual harassment, 40%, punching and hitting (hands only), 40%, kicking, 27%, the presence and use of guns, 26%, faculty fear to get involved, 26%, lack of conflict resolution skills, 26% and the use of knives, ice picks and razors 25%. The smaller districts' data indicated that the presence and use of guns, lack of conflict resolution skills and use of knives/ice picks and razors were not increasing. Yet these districts, along with midsize and large districts, saw an increase in rumors/peer escalation of events, vandalism and arson.

Location of Violent Events

The respondents were asked to list the school locations where violent events were most likely to occur. The five areas ranked as highest risk for school violence were: hallways 37%, restrooms 26%, buses 24%, extracurricular/athletic events 19%, and cafeteria/lunch areas 17%. In midsize and large school districts, 25% of respondents also indicated that school classrooms were areas of moderate to high risk for violence. Only 10% of respondents from smaller districts had indicated that classrooms were areas of potential violence. Regardless of geographic location, the data was consistent.

Violence and Grade Level

The respondents were asked to rate the changes in violent activity, based on their experience, over the past 2 years at each of the various school levels. The ratings ranged from greatly increased, increased, remained the same, to decreased and included a category for not a problem. Twenty-six percent of respondents saw violence increasing or greatly increasing at the preschool level. Fifty-three percent of the respondents saw violence increasing or greatly increasing at the elementary level, while 69% saw the same increase at the middle school/junior high level and 63% saw violence as increasing or greatly increasing at the senior high level. The data were generally consistent for all sized districts with incidents of violence increasing by the greatest percentage in the larger districts at each educational level.

Perceived Causes of Violence

Based on the review of the literature, ethnographic interviews and research interest, a list of twenty-nine specific influences/causes of violence as well as an "other" category was developed and listed on the survey. The respondents were asked to rate each cause or influence from strongly influential, influential, little influence to not influential in causing school violence. The top ten things seen as being strongly influential or influential in causing school violence were: a lack of rules or family structure 94%, a lack of involvement or parental supervision 94%, violence acted out by parents 93%, parental drug use 90%, student drug/alcohol use 90%, violent movies 85%, student poor self-concept/emotional disturbance 85%, violence in TV programs 84 %, nontraditional families /family structure 83% and gang activities 80%. The top six were consistent for all sized districts; only rank order differed. The midsize and large districts cited gang activities, availability of weapons and peer rumor/peer escalation as being in the top ten, smaller districts indicated the lack of trust in real or media authority figures, and lack of family involvement in moral/religious activities as predominant causes of violent incident increases.

Victims of Violence

Demographic information regarding student victims of violence was solicited from survey participants. Respondents were instructed to base answers on experiences at their individual school site. Responses received indicated that the victims' gender was primarily male 66%. However, 20% saw females as primary victims and 14% failed to answer. Forty-three percent saw the victim ethnic background as generally Caucasian, 27% saw victims as African American, 11% indicated that victims were generally Hispanic, 1% indicated victims as generally Asian, 1% denoted an "other" category while 17% of respondents failed to answer this section. The age of the victim in relation to the perpetrator was younger or the same age, at 26% and 63% respectfully. One percent indicated that the victim was older than the perpetrator and 10% didn't complete this item. The percentage of victims in middle school was cited as 39%, followed by high school at 32%, and then elementary school at 21%. Twenty five percent of respondents indicated that they thought the victims were involved with gangs. Twenty percent also indicated that they thought victims were involved with the sale and/or use of

drugs. School personnel were asked about the family structure of the victims. Survey results indicated that 50% of the respondents perceived victims as coming from single parent homes, while 34% indicated that they were not familiar with the family structure. Five percent indicated that victims came from two-parent homes, 3% of the respondents indicated that they came from some other type of home structure, and 8% failed to answer this item. The stability and emotional atmosphere of the family of the victim was perceived by 56% of the respondents as being unstable, 2% as being punitive, 5% as being stable, 30% as not knowing with 7% failing to complete the item. Sixty-five percent of the respondents indicated that the academic performance of the victims was seen as below average, 16% saw it as average, 3% as being above average, while 10% of the respondents didn't know and 7% failed to complete the item.

Perpetrators of Violence

Survey participants were asked to provide demographic information regarding student perpetrators of violence. As with the identification of victims of violence, respondents were instructed to base their response on their experiences within the school setting. The respondents indicated that the perpetrator's gender was primarily male 82%, while 6% indicated that females were primarily the perpetrators and 12% failed to answer the item. Thirty seven percent saw the ethnic background as generally Caucasian, 38% saw perpetrators as generally as African American, 12% indicated that they were generally Hispanic, 1% indicated perpetrators were generally Asian, 1% denoted an "other" category while 16% of respondents failed to answer this section. The age of the perpetrator as compared to the victim was in most cases seen as about the same age or older, at 69% and 21% respectfully. Two percent of the respondents indicated that the perpetrator was younger than the victim and 9% didn't complete this item. The greatest percentage of perpetrators was perceived to be at the middle school level (35%), followed by high school (33%), and then elementary school (23%). As for perpetrator involvement in gangs and drugs, 31% of respondents indicated that they thought the perpetrators were involved in or members of gangs. While 29% indicated that they thought perpetrators were involved with the sale and/or use of drugs. School personnel were asked about the family structure of the student perpetrators. Respondents indicated that 53% perceived these students

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as coming from single parent homes, 5% coming from two-parent homes, while 31% indicated that they didn't know about the family structure and 8% failed to answer this question. The stability and emotional atmosphere of the family of the perpetrator was perceived by 65% of the respondents as unstable, 1% as being punitive, 1% as stable, 25% as not knowing and 6.2% failing to complete the item. Seventy -seven percent of the respondents indicated that the academic performance of the perpetrators was perceived to be below average, 10% saw it as average, 0% as being above average, while 9% of the respondents didn't know and 7% failed to complete the item.

Legal and Fiscal Costs of School Violence

Seventy-seven site and district administrators were queried about the legal and fiscal costs of violence and violence prevention incurred by their districts. They were asked to rate whether various actions and programs regarding violence had greatly increased, increased, remained the same, decreased or were not a problem. In dealing with class action suites due to violence 20% stated legal costs had increased or greatly increased in the past two years. Twenty-five percent stated that fiscal compensation (i.e., workman's compensation, medical costs, settling out of court, etc.) had increased or greatly increased over the past two years. Thirty five percent of administrators indicated that legal prevention costs had increased or greatly increased over the past two years.

The site and district administrators were asked to rate whether violence prevention programs were over funded, properly funded, under funded or not funded in their districts. Underfunding was seen as a major problem for various programs and equipment in a majority of districts surveyed. For example: 52% indicated that monies available for security personnel were underfunded, 60% indicated that staff training in conflict resolution was underfunded, 48% stated that security equipment (i.e. cameras, metal detectors etc.) was underfunded while 48% saw a severe shortage of district money for alternate programs/schools, site maintenance/repair/upkeep, 65% and personnel replacement due to burnout fear, or injury 34%.

The eighteen district wide administrators were asked to estimate the cost to the district of programs primarily related to violence and/or violence prevention using the following scale: $0-$49999, $50000-$249999, $250000-$1000000, and $1000000 or more per year. Administrators indicated

that various amounts were spent on security personnel. Forty-four point four percent related spending $0-$49999 on security personnel, 5.6% spent $50000-$249999, and 11.1% spent $1000000 or more. In the area of staff training 38.9% spent $0-$49999, and 16.7% spent $50000-$249999. In the area of security equipment 33.3% spent $0-$49999, 22.2% spent $50000-$249999, and 5.6% spent $1000000 or more. Twenty seven point eight percent of district administrators indicated that they spent between $0-$49999 in the area of alternate programming/schools , 5.6% spent $50000-$249999, 16.7% spent $250000-$1000000 and 5.6% spent $1000000 or more. Site maintenance/repair/and upkeep found 33.3% of districts spending between $0-$49999, 11.1% spending between $50000-$249999, 5.6% spending from $250000-$1000000 and 5.6% spending over $1000000 in maintenance costs. District costs for personnel replacement due to burnout/fear/injury were equally high. Twenty seven point eight percent of administrators indicated they spend between $0 to $49,999 a year, 6% spend between $250000 and $1000000 and 11% spend $1000000 or more on the replacement and/or injury of school personnel due to violence.

Violence Prevention Programs

All respondents were asked to answer yes or no to items concerning whether their schools had twenty six of the most commonly cited programs found in the interviews and literature review. An "other" category asking them to describe any programs their district or school was using but was not included in the list was provided. A description of this program was requested from any marking this response. The ten most commonly implemented programs overall were: poverty issue programs (i.e. breakfast programs , book programs, etc.) tried by 84% of the districts, placing teachers in hallways was attempted by 79%, 72% had used alternate schools or educational models, 72% had also tried visitor registration and the wearing of identification passes. Seventy-one percent had tried to involve the community through business-school partnerships, 69% had implemented before/after school programs, 68 % had district and school programs to increase parental involvement, 67% had a dress code or clothing restrictions for students, 66.3% had incorporated peer mediation/conflict resolution training into their curriculum, 65% of the districts had uniform discipline policies and 65% had integrated multicultural/diversity awareness programs into their curriculum.

All respondents were also asked to rank order the top five most effective programs they or their school had personally implemented. The top ten programs/actions most commonly ranked as effective were: teachers placed in hallways, security personnel, police liaisons, peer mediation/conflict resolution training, alternate schools or educational models, closed campuses, metal detectors, removal of lockers, uniform discipline policies, and before or after school programs. Smaller schools placed alteration of class schedules, cameras, and programs to increase parental involvement on their list of most effective programs. Midsize districts placed teacher conflict management training and the use of dogs in their top ten list. The larger districts also placed dogs (i.e. drugs, explosives, etc.) in their specific top ten list.

These same respondents were asked to rank the top five least effective things they had personally implemented. The top ten most commonly mentioned programs which were ineffective included: transparent bookbags, dogs (i.e. drugs, explosives, etc.), removal of lockers, social skills training (i.e. students and teachers), security cameras, dress codes or clothing restrictions, multicultural/diversity awareness programs, programs to increase parental involvement, metal detectors, alteration of class schedules (i.e. changing between class times, lunch times, etc.). The smaller districts included poverty issue programs and alternative school/educational models in their top ten least effectively listed programs. Midsize districts placed business school partnerships and poverty issue programs in their top ten least effective and the large districts placed teacher conflict management training among their top ten least effectively listed programs.

DISCUSSION

Limitations

This study was limited in the scope of coverage by the sample that was chosen. While it incorporated school districts of various sizes from various regions, it was not able to assure sufficient representation of all schools in the country. Therefore, some error may have been introduced into the findings due to inadequate sampling. Additionally, while the researchers indicated as many possible interpretations of the data in the report as they were able, there may be other plausible explanations for the data which are as yet undiscovered.

Implications:

The survey results provided interesting and unique findings regarding the issue of school personnel safety, victim and perpetrator profiles, location of violent events, perceived causes/influences of violence, strategies to combat the violence issue in schools and their effectiveness and the costs to districts. These results, while limited, have provided enough information to give the researchers the ability to suggest strengths and weaknesses inherent in the current approaches to the problem of school violence. The results also allow the development of a model for prevention and remediation of school violence.

The respondents indicated that more than one in four (27%) school personnel were concerned or very concerned about their personal safety while at school. The greatest safety concerns for school personnel focused on verbal attacks or physical threats of violence by the students (35%) and/or the student's parents (30%). The greatest concerns for physical threats and verbal attacks were in the midsize and large districts. While school personnel's fear of student threats, attacks and violence had been expected, the nearly 30% of school personnel who indicated that they were equally intimidated by parents was unexpected and had not been found in the review of the literature. This finding will require a more in-depth investigation of parental profiles as well as current programs which deal with parental violence in schools. However, it appears to be a significant area and in need of attention if prevention and remediation programs are to be successful in schools.

Based on responses of school personnel, a profile of students who were most frequently victims of violence was compiled. The most frequent victims were males (66%) from a Caucasian (43%) or African American (27%) background who where the same age or younger than the perpetrator. These victims were most frequently students in middle school or high school from unstable single parent homes. Their academic success was viewed as below average and their gang affiliation was largely unknown by the respondents, as was their involvement with drugs or alcohol.

Another profile of the students who were most frequently perpetrators of violence at schools was also compiled. Students most frequently seen as perpetrators were males (82%) from a Caucasian (37%) or African American (39%) background who where the same age or older than the victim.

Perpetrators were most frequently students in middle school or high school from unstable single parent homes. The academic success of this group was viewed as below average and their gang affiliation was largely unknown by the respondents. Yet the perpetrators were generally viewed as involved with drugs or alcohol.

The methods of school violence, as well as the influences, which were seen as increasing or greatly increasing violence over the past two years were also compiled. Number one was verbal threats by students, second was organic problems of students (F.A.S., Crack Babies, etc.), followed by pushing or shoving (student to student), sexual harassment (student to student), punching or hitting (student to student), kicking (student to student), presence or use of guns, faculty fear to get involved in student disagreements, lack of conflict resolution skills, classroom/building vandalism, rumor/peer escalation of violence, and the use of knives/ice picks/razors (student to student).

Asking school personnel to recount the number of actual incidents of violence they had experienced allowed the researchers to determine whether or not the expressed fears were based on actual experience or due to media influences, rumors or other fear engendering sources. Respondents were asked about the frequency of verbal, physical and sexual threats/intimidation or attacks. They were also questioned about the frequency of classroom or school building vandalization. In the past 2 years 64% had been verbally threatened or intimidated, 28% had been physically threatened or intimidated and 11% had been sexually threatened or intimidated 1 or more times. School personnel indicated that 55% of the their classrooms and/or school buildings had been vandalized over the past two years. These results suggest that if these actions remain constant school personnel have a greater than 50% chance of being verbally attacked within the next two years, a 1 in 4 chance of being physically intimidated, and a 1 in 10 chance of being sexually harassed in the next 2 years. Further the results indicated more than 1 in 10 will be physically attacked in the next two years.

Results from this study also indicated that the school environment has "general areas" where the risk of incidents of school violence are moderately high to very high. The areas of greatest risk were hallways, restrooms, buses, athletic or extracurricular activities, cafeterias, and classrooms. This is consistent with previous research in this area. The greatest risk seems to occur during unstructured

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time when large numbers of students are interacting with one another (i.e., athletic events, cafeteria etc.) However, more than 1 in 4 respondents see the classroom as equally unsafe. This is more pronounced in the midsize (30%) and large districts (34%).

Insert Table 2 about here.

The results of the survey provided information on the major elements that were perceived to contribute to school violence by the respondents (see Table 2). The three most unanimous components cited by respondents as causes for school violence were: a lack of family involvement or supervision/rules, a lack of family structure and parental use of violence. Along with these elements, drug and alcohol use by students and parents was seen as contributing to school violence. Other factors were consistent with previous studies done in this area. They included: youth violence in the media, gang activities and changing family structures.

In order to identify underlying elements the twenty-eight possible perceived causes for school violence were subjected to a factor analytic investigation. A principal components analysis using varimax rotation indicated one main factor accounted for over 30% of the variance. This factor was the best described as the general decline of societal/family structures. As the data held one main factor this analysis was followed up by a principal components analysis using an oblique rotation. The data indicated three to six factors as possible using the eigenvalue rule of one and the scree test. These factor models were investigated, with the five factor solution making the most sense rationally. The five factors seen as most significantly contributing to school violence were: a lack of school resources or skills to deal with violence, violence in the media, drug related factors combined with family violence, the decline in family structure, and the breakdown in moral/ethical education of youth. This data confirms previous research which implicated the role of declining societal modeling, media violence and declining family structure as root causes in the development of school violence. The data further

suggests, aside from the previously stated factors, that a lack of skills and resources for professional educators combined with the lack of a moral/ethical education are significant contributors to this ever increasing problem. This indicates that American society must consider and decide the future role schools must play in our society; a role which focuses on pure academics or a role which focuses on schools as an alternate family. The data of this study strongly suggests that in order to effectively combat violence, schools will have to become an alternate family.

Insert Table 3 about here.

The information regarding strategies that schools are currently using to combat school violence was compiled in Table 3. Researchers then examined the programs implemented to determine which were seen as the most effective (see table 4) and least effective (see table 5).

Insert Table 4 about here.

Perceived effectiveness was fairly consistent for all but small schools who had not implemented some of the more costly programs or strategies. The areas which were cited to be the most effective in dealing with the issue of school violence involved training and allocation of resources for professional educators as well as the use of non-school personnel to support educators. Programs which affect moral/ethical development of children/adolescents such as social skills training or conflict management skills were also found in this list. However, the data revealed that schools tended to rely on the use of police/security personnel and technology to combat violence after the issue had become problematic when a proactive stance would have proved more beneficial. This is mirrored in the areas seen as ineffective (see Table 5). Six of the top ten ineffective strategies deal with this issue only after it became problematic. Additionally, many schools find diversity awareness education and social skills training ineffective as tools to deal with violence.

Insert Table 5 about here.

Suggested Violence Prevention Model:

The violence prevention model implicated in the data incorporates five major components in a proactive program targeting preschool and elementary aged children. Early and inclusive intervention is a hallmark of the model. The need for intervention at the preschool/elementary level is essential because interventions targeting middle schools and high schools have met with limited success (Johnson & Johnson, 1995). Research has demonstrated prevention models focused on at–risk populations have been shown to be effective when implemented at the preschool/elementary level (Baker, 1992). An explanation of the model components follows:

Family Commitment

Data from this study indicate that the preschool/elementary model must address the factors discussed earlier which were implicated as significant contributors to school violence. One of the most significant of these factors was the perceived decline in family structure and the breakdown in moral/ethical education of youth. While schools struggle to implement reactive measures of violence prevention, the data suggest that to successfully address the problem a proactive, comprehensive reorganization of the existing school structure must be undertaken. A key element in this reorganization is the recognition that schools will need to incorporate not only an academic focus for the student, but include the family within the educational structure. The restructuring of schools should include a new definition of the school as "town center" which supports, includes and engages the entire family in the scope of the educational setting. Research confirms that the typical American family has changed in many ways. Only 7% of families in this country could be described as "typical" of the families that shaped the legislation of the Great Society in the mid-1960s. Those families had two parents with defined roles; a working father and homemaking mother who provided structure, nurturing and support for school-age children (Heath and McLaughlin, 1987a). In the past twenty years, the percentage of children living with two parents has decreased dramatically (Hofferth, 1987). As the basic structure of

the family disintegrates, violence among family members increases and this domestic violence spills into the classroom (Lysted, 1986). A new picture of the school must emerge to provide the variety of services which are needed by families in order to alleviate incidents of school violence. Home, school and community must come together in a central location (i.e. the school campus) to make possible this reorganization of schools. Schools should strive to become part of any positive community effort (Hranitz and Eddowes, 1990). The successful combination of administrators, faculty, health care practitioners, counselors, social workers, childcare workers, technological support and community agency availability and funding is an essential component of the proactive elementary model. The family must be committed to the educational process while the educational structure must be committed to the family. Since the data indicates that schools need to take on roles previously played by family members, the roles of the teacher and administrator must also evolve. It may be that schools will need to fill the gap in these areas for families who are unable or unwilling to become involved.

Evolution of Teacher/Administrator Roles

This component would require schools at the preschool/elementary level to staff their buildings with personnel trained not only in traditional pedagogical methodologies but also in a comprehensive values education (Kirchenbaum, 1992.) This goes beyond the current implementation of ethical and social skills curriculums to an integrated and inclusive school environment involving the daily modeling of these skills by school personnel for students. As Kirchenbaum (1992) states in his article: Young people deserve to be exposed to the inculcation of values by adults who care: family members, teachers, and the community (p. 775). A significant component of values education is its emphasis on responsible or right decision making. Incorporation of this concept into the daily actions and lessons would help to prepare students for independence and could act as a vehicle in examining other factors considered as serious contributors to school violence: drug education, personal responsibility, social skills/conflict training, and media violence. The return of character education to the national educational agenda in the early 1990s is also an reflection of the need for school personnel to address nonacademic issues on a consistent basis. Family disintegration, rising youth violence and the impact of these trends (i.e. legal and fiscal costs, personnel safety issues) on schools emphasize that

the responsibility for teaching ethical and moral behavior cannot be ignored by the schools. In addition, this responsibility includes more than simply teaching the cognitive attributes of character development but must also include the emotional attributes of moral maturity such as conscience, self-respect, empathy and self control (Likona, 1993).

Student Success

The third component of the model involves creating a "success identity" as referred to by psychiatrist William Glasser and psychologist Don Dinkmeyer. The critical factor in meeting the basic needs of individuals is the creation of individual responsibility which significantly impacts personality development. If parents are able to demonstrate and convey a sense of responsibility for themselves as well as in their children, children will develop an integrated concept of self worth. This ultimately leads to what Glaser refers to as a "success identity" or Dinkmeyer calls "significance". Learning effective ways to satisfy basic needs actively contributes to building self esteem. Violence can be viewed as a reaction to unmet needs. The establishment and encouragement of self esteem in students is an absolute requirement of any successful model since self esteem is, in itself, a deterrent to participation in violent acts. School atmosphere can help engender self-esteem by encouraging individual pride and creating a sense of student ownership in specific ways. Michael Rutter(1979), in a study of inner city London schools, found that negative behavior and vandalism decreased significantly in schools where academics were stressed, incentives and rewards were made available to the students and students participated in decision-making. The need to establish the appropriate emotional environment, build self-esteem and establish a democratic school structure are essential elements in assuring student success (Bien, 1994; Dreiker, 1982).

Conflict Mediation

This component of the elementary model is not suggesting that there is a specific program of mediation which should be implemented in every classroom. Rather, this component emphasizes that the teaching of some form of conflict mediation, negotiation procedures and constructive resolution skills should be included in the curriculum of every classroom. As Johnson and Johnson (1995) have repeatedly suggested, the norms, values and culture of a school should promote negotiation and

mediation procedure by including classroom lessons on improving communication skills, ways to control anger, appropriate assertiveness, problem-solving skills, perspective-taking, creative thinking and other related interpersonal and small group skills (p. 101). Educators should also be trained to include the pedagogy of these skills at the earliest educational stages in order to achieve the best results. David Hamburg, President of Carnegie Corporation, states that reversing the trend of violence in the schools is dependent on teaching children the value of cooperating, sharing and helping others (Johnson and Johnson, 1995; Dinkmeyer and Dinkmeyer, 1982). Programs must emphasize student participation and discussion while including and emphasizing cooperation, trust, community, autonomy and self-reliance (Bien, 1994; Dreikers, 1982).

Media Intervention

There have been numerous conclusive studies which indicate a causal relationship between television violence and actual violence. Regardless of whether the relationship has a direct correlation, the power of the media should be addressed by educators when discussing the subject of school violence. Teachers must be equipped to deal with the influences children are exposed to outside the classroom. There are certain inclusive strategies which every teacher should implement in the classroom. These key elements include creating a safe classroom atmosphere, planning a curriculum which presents alternative reading material that meets each child's developmental needs and allows for the resolution of personal and ethical questions, communicating with children in the classroom while creating the opportunity to make informed choices and reaching out to parents to involve them in discussions and decisions concerning family choices for viewing, listening and reading (Levin and Carlsson-Paige, 1995). The influence of the media in the lives of children is pervasive. As Jane Healy states, schools will have to assume a more positive and educational role in guiding children who are "visually vulnerable", into analysis and evaluation of its content (p. 320). Visual literacy must now be taught in addition to print literacy (Greenfield, 1984). Teaching children to critically evaluate the violence they see on a screen teaches them to interact with their viewing choices and evaluate the impact of those choices on their own lives. The effective use of media within the classroom can have positive effects on the reduction of school violence.

Suggestions for Future Research:

Future research in this area would benefit from further examining several areas discussed in this study. Due to the essential component parental involvement plays in effective school reform (Westerberg, & Brickley. 1991) the school personnel's fear of parents needs to be investigated more thoroughly. Further, investigation into the effective components of alternative schools and their ability to deal with violent students should be performed. A closer examination the currently implemented effective violence prevention/reduction strategies at the various school levels and district sizes needs to be undertaken. Finally, the training of school personnel in the effective application of ethical/moral education needs to be more clearly defined, implemented and tested.

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Table 1: Demographics of Survey Respondents.

Gender	Ethnicity[1]	Education[2] Degree Held	School[3] Level	District Size (student pop.)	Children in School
164	3	76	90	11	71
(females)	(Asian)	(bachelor's)	(pre/elem.)	(1 - 999)	(no children)
115	35	180	90	57	58
(females)	(African-Amer.)	(masters)	(jr. high/middle)	(1,000 - 4,999)	(pre/elem.)
	12	23	84	46	46
	(Hispanic)	(doctorate)	(high school)	(5,000- 14,999)	(jr. high/middle)
	224		17	34	57
	(Caucasian)		(all grade)	(15,000 - 29,999)	(sr. high)
				43	98
				(30,000 - 49,999)	(college/grad.)
				66	
				(50,000 +)	

Note: Numbers in this table are based on frequency counts for each category.

[1] 17 respondents failed to answer the question regarding ethnicity.

[2] 12 respondents failed to answer the question regarding educational level obtained.

[3] 34 respondents failed to answer the question regarding school level where they work.

Table 2: Top 10 Perceived Causes for School Violence By All Districts and by District Sizes .

Cause	All Dist. (n=291)	Small* (n=68)	Midsize* (n=80)	Large* (n=109)
Lack of family involvement/supervision with children/adolescents lives	93.8%	95.5%	100%	91.7%
Lack of family rules and/or structure	93.8%	94.1%	99.8%	93.6%
Violence acted out by parents	92.5%	91.1%	97.5%	91.7%
Drug/alcohol use/abuse by students	89.7%	91.1%	91.3%	91.7%
Parental drug use/abuse	89.7%	83.8%	97.5%	89.0%
Student poor self-concept or emotional disturbance	84.9%	88.2%	85.0%	83.5%
Violent movies	84.9%	79.4%	91.3%	85.3%
Change in family patterns to nontraditional patterns (i.e. single parent, etc.)	82.5%	82.4%	90.0%	•
Violence in TV programs	83.6%	76.5%	93.8%	83.5%
Gang Activities	80.5%	•	83.4%	89.9%
Lack of family involvement in moral/religious activities	•	77.9%	•	•
Lack of trust/ credibility in authority/figures (real and portrayed)	•	76.5%	•	•
Availability of weapons	•	•	83.4%	85.3%
Rumors among peers or peer escalation	•	•	83.4%	•

* NOTE: Numbers represent the percentage of positive responses to each cause. Small districts were 0 to 4999, Midsize districts were 5000 to 29999 and Large districts were 30000 or more students population.

• Not one of the top ten perceived causes of school violence.

Table 3: Top 10 Procedures or Strategies Implemented in Schools All Districts and by District Size.

Program	All Dist. (n=291)	Small* (n=68)	Midsize* (n=80)	Large* (n=109)
Poverty issue programs (breakfast, book programs, etc.)	83.8%	82.3%	83.8%	84.4%
Teachers placed/present in hallways	79.0%	72.1%	81.3%	82.6%
Alternative schools or educational models	71.8%	67.6%	83.8%	73.4%
Visitor registration, wearing passes, doors locked	71.8%	•	81.3%	85.3%
Business/school partnerships	70.8%	52.9%	72.5%	79.8%
Programs to increase parental involvement	68.0%	66.2%	•	71.6%
Dress code or clothing restrictions	74.3%	58.8%	77.5%	•
Peer mediation/conflict resolution training	66.3%	55.8%	•	78.9%
Uniform discipline procedures/policies (or stricter approach)	65.3%	63.2%	72.5%	67.9%
Multicultural/diversity awareness programs	65.3%	•	67.5%	74.3%
Before or after school programs	•	57.4%	77.5%	71.6%
Closed campus (no off campus lunches, etc.)	•	•	67.5%	•
Social Skill training programs (teacher or students)	•	60.3%	•	•

* NOTE: Numbers represent percentage of schools that have implemented each strategy. Small districts were 0 to 4999, Midsize districts were 5000 to 29999 and Large districts were 30000 or more students population.

• Was not one of the top ten strategies implemented.

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Table 4: Perceived Top 10 Most Effective Violence Prevention Strategies by All Districts and by District Size.

Strategy	All Dist. Rank	Small* Rank	Midsize* Rank	Large* Rank
Teachers placed/present in hallways	1	1	1	2
Security personnel	2	•	7	1
Police liaison or specially trained positive police presence	3	•	3	6
Peer mediation/conflict resolution training	4	•	2	7
Alternative schools/educational models	5	3	5	10
Closed campus (no off campus lunches, etc.)	6	9	10	5
Metal detectors	7	•	•	3
Removal of lockers	8	6	•	4
Uniform discipline policies/procedures (or stricter approach)	9	4	8	8
Before/After school programs	10	10	•	•
Alteration of class schedules	•	3	•	•
Programs to increase parental involvement	•	8	•	•
Social skills training for students or teachers	•	5	•	•
Cameras	•	7	6	•
Dogs (drugs, explosives, etc.)	•	•	4	9
Teacher conflict management training	•	•	9	•

* NOTE: Numbers represent percentage of schools that have implemented each strategy and rank them in the top ten as most effective. Small districts were 0 to 4999, Midsize districts were 5000 to 29999 and Large districts were 30000 or more students population.

• Was not ranked in the top ten strategies seen as most effective.

Table 5: Perceived Top 10 Least Effective Violence Prevention Strategies All Districts and by District Size.

Strategy	All Dist. Rank	Small* Rank	Midsize* Rank	Large* Rank
Transparent book bags	1	•	•	1
Dogs (drugs, explosives, etc.)	2	•	2	3
Removal of lockers	3	•	1	6
Social skills training (teacher or student)	4	9	4	2
Cameras	5	•	6	7
Dress code or clothing restrictions	6	5	7	5
Multicultural or diversity awareness programs	7	4	5	8
Programs to increase parental involvement	8	7	8	9
Metal detectors	9	1	3	•
Alteration of class schedules	10	•	•	4
Peer mediation/conflict resolution training	•	2	•	•
Programs to increase community involvement	•	3	•	•
Poverty issue programs (breakfast, book programs, etc.)	•	6	9	•
Security personnel	•	8	•	•
Alternative schools/educational models	•	10	•	•
Business school partnerships	•	•	10	•
Teacher conflict management training	•	•	•	10

* NOTE: Numbers represent percentage of schools that have implemented each strategy and rank them in the top ten of least effective strategies. Small districts were 0 to 4999, Midsize districts were 5000 to 29999 and Large districts were 30000 or more students population.

• Was not ranked in the top ten strategies perceived as least effective.

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